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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 004590

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [BK](#)

SUBJECT: SFOR TRANSITION: TURKS CONCERNED THAT EUROPEAN UNION MAY SEEK TO EXCLUDE TURKEY FROM COMMAND HQ, RAISE CYPRIOT AND MALTESE ATTENDANCE AT NATO/EU PLANNING MEETINGS

Classified By: DCM Robert S. Deutsch for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) PolMilOff met Aug. 10 with Col. Halit Yilmaz, Chief of TGS's NATO Operations Branch office. Yilmaz reported that Turkey is committed to remain in SFOR at its current (one battalion) level after SFOR becomes an EU operation, and said he believes that the EU wants Turkey to stay. However, he expressed two concerns surrounding this transition. First, he had heard of "reports circulating around Brussels" that the EU may seek to exclude non-EU members from both the general SFOR HQ and the regional command HQs. This would, warned Yilmaz, "be a direct violation of Berlin-plus" and have serious consequences for Turkey's participation. Yilmaz added that Turkey was attending an SFOR-North "mini force generating conference" Aug. 11 in Helsinki (he said the Finns will command the north), and said that if the EU were to make a move toward excluding the Turks from HQs, this would come at the mission-wide conference planned for September. The Turks intend to offer personnel for both the mission-wide and northern SFOR HQs. PolMilOff responded that we would monitor this issue.

2. (C) Yilmaz cited a second concern, one that MFA Deputy Director General Fatih Ceylan had also raised with PolMilCouns on July 26. The Turks are concerned that Malta and Cyprus, who have apparently not signed NATO security agreements, will participate in NATO/EU planning meetings. Both Ceylan and Yilmaz made the point that Cyprus was a particular problem given the failure of the April referendum, and that Turkey cannot deal with the GOC as if it were a representative of the entire island.

3. (C) Comment: While the EU would be short-sighted in excluding the Turks from SFOR HQs, we are uncertain if the EU would be outside their rights to do so. While the spirit may be clear, the relevant documents--Annex II of the October 2002 EU Council conclusions (the implementing document for the EU's agreement with Turkey on ESDP) and the Dec. 16, 2002 EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP--leave room for interpretation. The Turks have told us repeatedly that they want to participate in the EU successor to SFOR, but exclusion from the operation's HQ would bode ill for this participation. End comment.
EDELMAN